FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM

ACHIEVING FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Idaho Housing and Finance Association
www.idahohousing.com
WHAT IS FSS?
Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) is a voluntary program that helps Idaho households become economically independent. This program helps families and individuals (participants) learn to take control of their lives and achieve complete financial independence within five years. Participation in the FSS program does not affect a household's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) subsidy.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?
Anyone currently participating in Idaho Housing and Finance Association’s (IHFA) HCV program who has employment goals and wishes to achieve financial independence may enroll.

HOW DOES FSS WORK?
Each head of household voluntarily enrolls in the FSS program by completing an application, signing a Contract of Participation (contract) and developing an Individual Training and
Service Plan (plan) with an IHFA FSS specialist. The contract and corresponding plan outline the responsibilities of the family and IHFA to meet financial and employment goals.

The FSS specialist and the participant work together to define and choose career and financial goals, often including homeownership. Working as a team, the participants and the FSS specialist identify and eliminate obstacles to financial independence and self-sufficiency. FSS specialists help participants develop a financial plan that includes tracking spending, developing a budget and spending plan, reading a credit report, and developing a plan for credit repair.

WHAT ABOUT SUPPORT SERVICES?

The participant and FSS specialist develop economic independence strategies with local social service providers. FSS participants can expect help from their FSS specialist or other community service providers to resolve the following needs:

- Child care
- Transportation
- Education
- Job search and job retention skills
- Financial planning, including credit repair
- Homeownership counseling

Participants are responsible for requesting assistance from the appropriate agency and completing any requirements it may have.

WHAT IS THE FSS ESCROW SAVINGS ACCOUNT?

Another benefit participants receive is an interest-bearing escrow (savings) account. This accrues as the household’s portion of rent increases because of an increase in earned income. The account is held until the participant successfully completes the contract. The contract can be completed in two ways:
• When the participant has completed all their goals before the end of their contract and has been free of welfare benefits (Temporary Assistance for Families in Idaho — this does not include food stamps, medical assistance or child care assistance) for 12 consecutive months, OR

• When 30% of the participant’s adjusted income exceeds the HUD Fair Market Rent for the household.

Once the participant has successfully completed the contract, the escrow account may be used as they wish. If the participant does not report income changes or pay their portion of rent on time it could adversely affect their escrow account.

The escrow account and the accrued interest are not required to be reported to any other agency since it is not a resource or property for the participant until successful completion of the contract. In addition, the Internal Revenue Service has ruled that FSS escrow payments are nontaxable.

**WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?**

FSS participants must complete and sign a contract and have a current, signed plan. The contract and the attached plan provide a framework for the participant’s goals and describe the specific activities they must complete. Each participant has up to five years to reach economic self-sufficiency. The contract and all the activities on the plan must be completed to access the escrow savings account.

The participant is also responsible for maintaining contact with their FSS specialist and following through on other commitments established in the contract and plan.

A participant’s plan is revised and updated as the household moves towards economic self-sufficiency. The program offers households the flexibility to adjust its plan for emergencies and unusual situations.
HOW DO I APPLY FOR FSS?

To make an appointment and learn more about FSS, contact the local IHFA branch office in your area:

**Coeur d’Alene Branch**
915 W. Canfield Avenue  
Coeur d’Alene, ID 83815  
208.762.5113 • 866.621.2994

**Idaho Falls Branch**
506 S. Woodruff Ave.  
Idaho Falls, ID 83401  
208.522.6002 • 866.684.3756

**Lewiston Branch**
215 Tenth Street, Suite 101  
P.O. Box 342  
Lewiston, ID 83501  
208.743.0251 • 866.566.1727

**Twin Falls Branch**
844 Washington St. N., Suite 300  
Twin Falls, ID 83301  
208.734.8531 • 866.234.3435

**Or You May Contact:**

Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator  
Idaho Housing And Finance Association  
P.O. Box 7899  
Boise, ID 83707-1899  
208.331.4796 • 800.458.2791  
FSS@IHFA.org
Idaho Housing and Finance Association improves lives and strengthens Idaho communities by expanding housing opportunities, building self-sufficiency, and fostering economic development. Idaho Housing is self-supporting and generates its revenue through fees for work performed.

For complete program descriptions, visit www.idahohousing.com or call our toll-free number at 866.432.4066.